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COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Fifty-fourth session
Agenda items 8 and 10

QUESTION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF ALL PERSONS SUBJECTED TO ANY FORM OF DETENTION OR IMPRISONMENT

QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Letter dated 8 April 1998 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights

I am addressing you with reference to the statement made by the representatives of the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina at the session of the Commission of 2 April 1998.

We reject as unfounded and malicious the allegations on the existence of hidden prisons, detention camps and detainees in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. It is sheer fabrication launched by individual representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina from time to time, subject to their propaganda requirements.

The said attempted provocation is yet another deplorable instance of abuse of a major humanitarian issue for political purposes.

Last February, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) representatives made a tour of prisons in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. They had unlimited access without prior notification to all the establishments they wanted to visit. Their priority was the Sremska Mitrovica prison, since the representatives of Bosnia and Herzegovina had launched false allegations whereby hidden men from Srebrenica had been imprisoned there. In their letter to the Federal Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the ICRC representatives apprised our competent bodies that they could not confirm the above allegations, indicating also that they were given free access without notification to the alleged venues where the prisoners were kept.

Representatives of foreign and Yugoslav media have also visited the Sremska Mitrovica prison and saw for themselves that the allegations on hidden detainees were untrue, as clearly declared at the press conference upon the visit.

Once again, we would like to underscore that the issue of missing persons in the territory of the former Yugoslavia should be tackled with extreme seriousness and that any propaganda drives in this connection could be counter-productive.

I would request you, Mr. Chairman, to have this letter distributed to all the members of the Commission and to have it published as an official document of the fifty-fourth session, under agenda items 8 and 10.

(signed) Mr. Miroslav Milošević
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

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QUESTION OF THE VIOLATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS IN ANY PART OF THE WORLD, WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO COLONIAL AND OTHER DEPENDENT COUNTRIES AND TERRITORIES

Letter dated 14 April 1998 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights

In the course of consideration of items 10, 9 and 12 of the agenda of the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on Human Rights, the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan has circulated appalling letters contained in documents E/CN.4/1998/131, 140, 151 and 154. This massive attack represents a standard product of the Azerbaijani propaganda machinery which seems not to have any limits to its creativity.

Being very low in quality and cheap in contents these letters have been designed by the Azerbaijani Government with the objective of discrediting Armenia and Nagorny-Karabakh during the Commission's present session by misleading the international community through impressive falsifications and defamatory facts and figures. The cynicism of the way in which it is done is frightening in its simplicity.

My delegation regrets the fact that Azerbaijan does not cease playing the game of projecting the image of victim of the so-called "Armenian aggression". The events of Khodjaly reflected in documents E/CN.4/1998/140 and 154 are the pinnacle of the Azeri allegations.

The delegation of Armenia would comment on this by referring to the interview of the President of Azerbaijan, Aiaz Mutalibov, with Czech journalist Dana Mazalova published in the 2 April 1992 issue of the Russian newspaper Nizavisimaya Gazeta. The President of Azerbaijan stated that the militia of the Azerbaijani National Front (ANF) actively obstructed and actually prevented the evacuation of the local civilian population from the zone of military operations through the mountain passages specifically left open by Karabakh Armenians.

The hope and intention of the Azerbaijani opposition was to utilize civilian losses of such a magnitude as to instigate a popular uprising against the Baku regime and seize the reins of power.

In a Helsinki Watch report of September 1992 an Azerbaijani woman is quoted as confirming that Armenians had advised the Azerbaijani civilian population to leave the town with white flags raised. In fact, the Azerbaijani militia shot those who attempted to flee.

To further clarify the issue, let us note that the international community has already witnessed and confirmed the countless atrocities of the Azerbaijani Government towards the defenceless Armenian population.

Ten years ago, in 1988, as a response to a peaceful and constitutional demand of the Nagorny-Karabakh people to exercise its right to self-determination, the Azeri authorities organized an armed mob which launched pogroms against Armenians living in the Azeri city of Sumgait. These massacres were the first acts of mass killings on the territory of the former Soviet Union, as documented by the criminal proceedings launched by the Soviet authorities. Immediately after declaring its independence, Azerbaijan freed the accused murderers and openly saluted them as national heroes in the mass media.

A Helsinki Watch report of the time testifies that "these events were intended to exacerbate the fear and horror of ethnic Armenians in the other parts of Azerbaijan". Massacres in Ganja, Baku and other cities between 1988 and 1991 were far more barbaric and massive, leading to the deportation and ethnic cleansing of about half a million Armenians.

These atrocities were followed by unprecedented Azeri military offensives and operations designed to implement a military solution by annihilating the Nagorny-Karabakh population. It has to be finally and forever clarified that it was Azerbaijan which started an armed aggression against Nagorny-Karabakh.

Armenia is convinced that by far the better solution would be the restoration of the fundamental and lawful rights of the 250,000 Armenians living in the Nagorny-Karabakh region by addressing their constitutional demands for their right to self-determination.

My delegation is reluctant to engage in a "war of letters" and considers the above-mentioned facts as sufficient to conclude.

(Signed) Karen NAZARIAN
Permanent Representative

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RIGHTS OF PERSONS BELONGING TO NATIONAL OR ETHNIC, RELIGIOUS AND LINGUISTIC MINORITIES

Letter dated 14 April 1998 from the Chargé d'Affaires of the Permanent Mission of Latvia to the United Nations Office at Geneva addressed to the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights

Since I was not given the right to speak after the Russian Federation withdrew its draft resolution on Latvia, I am submitting the concerns of our delegation in written form.

The fact that Russia withdrew its draft resolution E/CN.4/1998/L.32 is a positive outcome of consultations that took place here, in Geneva, and in various capitals, since our human rights record does not give any grounds for tabling a resolution entitled "Human Rights Situation in Latvia".

Despite the withdrawal of the draft resolution, the attitude of senior Russian officials, including President Yeltsin's recent call for economic sanctions against Latvia, should remain a matter of serious concern to the international community. During these last weeks increasing pressure has been put on Latvia through various channels, including calls by the Mayor of Moscow, to boycott Latvian goods and several Federal Governor's activities supporting introduction of economic sanctions.

Latvia is grateful to all those who assist us in resolving complex and sensitive issues resulting from the illegal occupation by the Soviet Union for more than 50 years. Massive transfer of populations has occurred thus drastically changing the ethnic composition in Latvia. Since the very beginning of its legislative effort to solve the citizenship and minority issue, Latvia has maintained an open and cooperative dialogue with various international organizations and countries. Further political consultations are taking place now and we foresee that important steps will soon be taken to

facilitate the process of naturalization. Initial consensus on proposals for legislative amendments has already been achieved in the Cooperation Council of the ruling coalition parties. These proposals are submitted to Parliamentary Committees for consideration. The President of Latvia has taken a firm stand, calling political parties to show responsibility.

The extreme and categorical position of certain senior Russian officials is not conducive to the development of good neighbourly relations, nor does it promote confidence and mutual understanding between Latvia and Russia. For its part Latvia is ready to resume a constructive dialogue with Russia in an open and respectful manner. We hope that the Commission as well as the international community will support Latvia's efforts.

On behalf of the delegation of Latvia, I kindly request the Secretariat to circulate this letter as an official document of the fifty-fourth session of the Commission on Human Rights.

(Signed): Romans Baumanis
Chargé d'Affaires